RE. FALL IN THE PRICE OF COCONUT . . . . .

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Kerala): Sir, coconut is a major component of the Kerala economy and is also the livelihood of the ordinary people. The name Kerala means 'the land of coconut'. 'Kera' means coconut. Today we are suffering because of the fall in the price of coconut. It has become a periodical phenomenon. We in the Parliament as well as the people in the State have demanded the Government to maintain at least a minimum price level. When the price goes down the people suffer. It is the big monopoly people, who deal in oil and other things, who are benefited. In this connection the farmers of Kerala, especially the coconut farmers of South India, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka as well, have expressed their distress. There is so much of distress. There is so much of anxiety because of the fall in the price. So, we have demanded, we have requested, all of us cutting across party lines, that the Government should increase the price and the Government has agreed to have an increase in the support price. Though it is done, we are not happy. We are very much upset because there is only an increase of Rs. 250. It has been increased from Rs. 2,250 to Rs. 2,500 per quintal. If you take the price of all other oil components like groundnut, etc., you will find that coconut is given the least price increase and a stepmotherly treatment by the Agricultural Commission for Costs and Prices as well as the Government. My friends from Tamil Nadu will agree with me that there is a stepmotherly attitude. The point is different. According to the Press reports copra has been sold at Rs. 2,070 at Cochin. The price, which the Government has fixed, is Rs. 2,500. The selling price at Cochin market is Rs. 2270. Who is at loss? The poor farmers are at loss. So, it is necessary not only to declare the price, but also the Government should step in and purchase the stock. Who is to do it? The agency is NAFED. The NAFED refuses to do that. The Government of Kerala requested the NAFED to come to the market and to purchase it at the price fixed by the Government of India, that is Rs. 2,500 per quintal. But, unfortunately, the NAFED is refusing, arrogantly refusing, to do that and says, "We are not prepared to purchase." It says, "We lost money last year". The Government of India must give a direction to the NAFED with financial assistance. In this connection, I appeal to the Government, I urge upon the Government, to give a direction to the NAFED to go to the markets of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and wherever the markets are there and to purchase coconut on the basis of the price announced by the Government of India, that is, Rs. 2,500, and to protect the interests of the farmers who grow coconut.

SHRI G. SWAMINATHAN (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the sentiments expessed by Mr. Vayalar Ravi. I strongly feel that something serious should be done by the Government so that coconut gets its due price.

SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL (Madhya Pradesh): Sir, I would like to associate myself with what Mr. Vayalar Ravi has spoken about the problems of coconut-growers not only from Kerala but also from every part of the country. Aport from the points which he has already made, there are two other aspects connected with this. One is that the policy of liberalisation results in import of coconut oil freely from other countries. It adversely affects the coconut farmers. Secondly, there is a concerted propaganda let loose by certain vested interests that coconut oil is harmful. This propaganda also adversely affects the farmers' interests. The Government should step in in the right manner to see that the farmers' interests are safeguarded.

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN (Tamil Nadu): I am sorry, Sir. I thought Mr. Ravi had been speaking on the Rajiv Gandhi issue. I did not notice that it was coconut. I did not want to interrupt him. Since the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs is here, I would

request her to respond whether a statement can be made.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MD. SALIM): She is here. Unless she wants.

SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN: I am just requesting her.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MD. SALIM): ... we will switch over to the other matter. The matter raised by you is important. So many Members associated themselves with it.

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI MARGARET ALVA:) I will certainly convey the feeling of the House to Mr. Chidambaram. I will certainly tell him what the Members' views are. This matter was being handled by the Home Minister up till now. He has taken over just a week ago. By this time he would not have really got the fides. They may be in his hands for the last two or three days. I don't know whether he will be in a position to come straightaway and say, "I can do this or that". I will certainly convey the views of the House to him. This is a matter of great concern to all of us in the country, in the House and particularly in the party. I shall certainly convey this to him.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI MD. SALIM): Madam Minister, even if you don't intervene or announce, you are supposed to convey the sentiments of the House to the concerned Minister.

RE: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PRIMARY EDUCATION PROJECT LAUNCHED BY TAMIL NADU GOVERNMENT

SHRI S. MUTHU MANI (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, through this august House I wish to draw the attention of the Central Government to the District Primary Education Project launched by the Tamil Nadu Government and the urgency to give financial assistanec to the Project by the Central Government.

With the major objective of universal enrolment of school age children and their retention, particularly girls and SC/ST students up to Class V, our hon. Chief Minister, Dr. Puratchi Thalaivi, has launched this scheme in four districts of Tamil Nadu with World Bank assistance. Overcoming the serious problem of poor infrastructure and ensuring minimum levels of learning are the two other important goals of this project. Our hon. Chief Minister is very keen to raise the level of female literacy in the State with the ultimate goal of total literacy.

Construction of two or three additional classrooms in each school, provision of toilets for girl students, drinking water facility, besides special encouragement to enrol drop-outs and less privilleged children are being targeted under this project. A key input of the project towards human resource development is the setting up of a Block Resource Centre in each Panchayat Union to act as nuclei for inservice training programmes for teachers.

Tamil Nadu has envisaged implementation of DPEP as a seven-year project involving a total outlay of Rs. 125.80 crores. During the first year of the project, just over Rs. 3 crores were earmarked for construction of essential buildings, acquisition of furniture, and purchase of some basic equipment and teaching-learning materials. The draft proposal for the current year envisages a total amount of Rs. 24.92 crores. Out of this the share of Tamil Nadu is Rs. 3.22 crores and the Rs. 21.70 crores is to be given by the Union Government under Centrally sponsored assistance as per the agreed ratio. The Government of Tamil Nadu has already sought Central clearance for an allocation of Rs. 21.70 crores for executing the District Primary Education Project.